

My name is Ryan Reed and I am honored to have this opportunity to speak to you today. I was born in Ludington, MI and it is where I have returned to reside today. I am a documentary photographer by trade now, having spent my entire professional career on Sudan, but five years ago I was among the newest alums of Calvin College.

It was in 2002 when I first set off to Africa in earnest to document critical social issues with a camera. Within months I found my way into the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northwestern Kenya – home to nearly ninety thousand displaced persons; most of them Sudanese. Living among and moving through the largest displaced population in the world from any one country, nearing eight million today, had a profound impact on me. It solidified my commitment to raising the level of debate on their plight. In reality there is no need to debate the facts on this matter - no question about the strategic and designed nature of more than three million brutal deaths at the hands of the Sudanese Government over the last two and a half decades in South Sudan and now in Darfur. The only debate left worth having is what can be done.

For the last five years, I have watched the mighty UN rendered useless by Chinese business interests with the Khartoum regime. Both have gotten rich while the Sudanese people endure gross violations of their human rights so as to perpetuate that wealth. I watched hopeful as the International Criminal Court submitted two indictments of Sudanese individuals – those hopes dashed as I listened to the ease with which the Sudanese ambassador to the US dismissed the jurisdiction of the ICC in his country, as the US has not ratified it. I listened to our own administration call this “genocide” and yet we have only been able to muster a response of humanitarian aid. We need more than a band-aid solution to stop a homicidal rouge regime with the track record to prove it. We need to be equally as strategic in our prevention of mass murder as these genocidaires have been in the undertaking of such calculated slaughter.

Standing before you is an urgent question of moral obligation as to the way forward. As it relates to this bill on divestment I feel there is no question. When the systems we rely on to prevent genocide fail us we must acknowledge the need for new ones. Since this genocide is so obviously market driven, I ask that you, through support of this bill, help create a market environment inhospitable to genocide and mass human rights violations.

On behalf of so many without a voice, I consider myself privileged to have had the opportunity for mine to be heard today on such a crucial issue. I urge you now to make yours known.